



BMW 7 Series

Luxury limo gets a new look, engine and infotainment upgrades and more advanced tech **On sale** Now **Price from** £73,600



Alan Taylor-Jones

Alan.Taylor-Jones@haymarket.com

IF YOU'RE IN the fortunate position of looking to buy a massive luxury liner of a car, the BMW 7 Series has always offered something a little different from rivals such as the Audi A8 and Mercedes-Benz S-Class. Although it can cosset its occupants, it's also a firm favourite for those who want to drive rather than be driven.

A raft of upgrades for 2019 aim to bring the fight to its more recently released or refreshed rivals. If you look past the giant grille – a whole 40% bigger than before – you'll find a revised infotainment system with the latest software and improved voice control, as well as a new, fully digital instrument cluster and improved semi-autonomous driving functionality.

The car promises to be quieter, too, thanks to thicker acoustic glass on the side and rear windows and improved sound deadening around the rear seat area. If comfort for rear seat passengers is the priority, there's also a long-wheelbase variant that stretches the gap between the front and rear wheels by 14cm.

In addition to the 3.0-litre six-cylinder



Interior is plush but a little too much like the 5 Series'

diesel, expected to be the most popular choice, engine options include a heavily reworked 4.4-litre petrol V8 in the 750i and new plug-in hybrids (745e and 745Le). The former will be available in standard length with four-wheel drive, while the latter offer a choice of lengths and rear or four-wheel drive.

Adaptive air suspension is standard on all models, allowing you to pick between maximum waft, a firmer sports setting and a mode that adapts to your driving style. Rippled roads are smoothed off well, although the softest (Comfort Plus) mode can make the 7 Series feel a little wallowy. Expansion joints and potholes cause more of a thud than you'd get in an A8, at least on the optional 20in wheels fitted to our test cars.

Otherwise, the 7 Series is impressively hushed. Road and wind noise are well isolated, while the 745e can drive in whisper-quiet electric mode for up to 36 miles (officially) while emitting as little as 48g/km of CO₂.

The hybrid now features a silken six-cylinder

petrol engine instead of the previous model's slightly gruff four-cylinder unit, so it's refined even when the battery charge is depleted. The 750i's V8 is more noticeable, but we suspect intended buyers will appreciate its burly background rumble. Power has increased by 79bhp to 523bhp – enough to hurl this vast limo down the road with enough force to embarrass many out-and-out sports cars.

You can hustle the 7 Series along a winding road, but even with optional four-wheel steering helping to tuck its nose into corners, it can't hide its bulk. Add in steering that blots out any information about grip and you'll soon go back to a more relaxed cruise.

A five-seat interior is standard, but you can also specify a four-seat setup with reclining rear pews. In the long-wheelbase car, rear seat space is just as plentiful as you'll find in its rivals, so you can stretch out in total comfort. There's loads of supple leather and classy wood trim, but it lacks the wow factor of the S-Class's

interior and the configurable digital dials are harder to read than those in the A8 and S-Class.

All in all, while the 7 Series is improved, we'd still take the A8 for its superior comfort, finish and refinement.

BUYER'S FILE

BMW 745e PHEV

Price	£78,485
Engine	6cyl, 2998cc, turbo, petrol, plus electric motor
Power	389bhp (combined)
Torque	442lb ft (combined)
Gearbox	8-speed automatic
0-62mph	5.2sec
Economy (WLTP)	122.8-141.2mpg combined
CO ₂ , tax band	52-46g/km (WLTP), 10-13%

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WHATCAR? SAYS

Plug-in hybrid impresses, but it can't quite match its best rivals for comfort and interior quality

